REFORMATION

OF

CHURCH-GOVERNMENT

IN

SCOTLAND,

Cleared from some mistakes and prejudices:

BY

The COMMISSIONERS *of the Generall Assembly of the Church of* SCOTLAND, *now at* London.

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Reformation of Church-Government *in* Scotland, *cleered from some mistakes and prejudices.*

WHile we, the meaneſt of many our Brethren, for a time ſeparated from our particular callings and ſtations, and ſent forth into this Kingdome for a more publike imployment, are in all humility and patience, waiting what the Lord who is about ſome great Work in his Church, (for which are raiſed ſo great Commotions in theſe and other Kingdoms of the earth) will be pleaſed to do for Reformation of Religion, the great Work of the honourable houſes of Parliament, and the reverend Aſſembly of Divines; and for Uniformity in Religion, ſo much deſired by all the godly in the three Kingdomes: Unto whch an entrance is made by a ſolemne League and Covenant. We finde our ſelves bound againſt the prejudices and miſtakings of ſome, who in the dark are afraid of that which they know not, and ſuffer their affections of love and hatred to run before their underſtanding; and againſt the miſ-repreſentations and indirect aſperſions of others, who do ſo commend their own way, that the reformed Churches thereby ſuffer diſparagement; To give that teſtimony unto the order and government of the Reformed Churches, and particularly of the Church of Scotland, which they do well deſerve, and to honour them whom the Lord hath ſo highly honoured, in advancing the Kingdom of his Son, in the converting

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and saving of so many souls, and in opposing and suppressing a world of corruptions, Heresies, and Schismes, by his wonderfull blessing upon their order and Government.

Our intention.

In this our humble testimony and true relation, unto which we are at this time thus necessitate, we shall endeavour nothing but a simple and innocent manifestation and defence, without desire or intention to give the smallest offence to any who fear God, love the Truth, & desire to walk in truth and in love with their Brethren. This our profession, we are confident will finde credit with all that know us, and have observed our wayes since our coming into this Kingdom, which have been, and (so farre as the the truth will suffer us) ever shall be, to unite, and not to divide; to compose, rather then to create differences; which we conceive also to be one principall end, of the calling of the Assembly of Divines, and which all the members of the Assembly, against all particular interests, are after a speciall manner ingaged to aime at and endeavour.

The Government of the Reformed Churches is known.

The order and Government of the reformed Churches in the beauty and strength thereof, as it is not hid in a corner, wrapped up in a Mystery, or covered under a cloud of darknesse; but is known to the Nations and Kingdomes of the earth, openly professed and practised in the eyes of the world, and cleerly seen, as a City that is set on a hill, in the light of the Sunne at noone day; So is it commended, and already confirmed by a long tract of time, and the experience of many yeers, and hath been countenanced from Heaven, and blessed from above, with the preservation of the truth and unity of Religion, against Heresies and errours in Doctrine, Idolatry and corruptions in worship, and all sorts of Sects and Schismes, wherewith it

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hath been continually assaulted: *How goodly are thy Tents O Jacob, and thy Tabernacles O Israel, &c.* It hath made the Church of Christ terrible as an Army with banners, and like a strong and fenced City, against which the Adversaries have despaired to prevaile, but by making a breach in this wall, and where they have gained ground or gotten any advantage, either the wall hath not been built, or being built hath been broken down, or not vigilantly keeped by the Watch-men.

The Reformers of the Church of Scotland.

The Instruments which the Lord used in the blessed Work of Reformation of the Church of Scotland (wee speak not of the reformers of other Churches) were not onely learned and holy men, but had somewhat in their calling, gifts, and zeal to the glory of God, more then ordinary: Their Adversaries were not able to resist the wisdome and Spirit by which they spake; some of them had a propheticall Spirit, manifested in divers particular and wonderfull predictions, and some of them were honoured to be Martyrs, and sealed the truth with their blood: So that in them, in the people of God converted by them, and and in the Reformation brought about by the blessing of God upon their labours, against all the Learning, Pride, Policie, and abused power of the time, there was to bee seen a representation of the Primitive and Apostolicke times, and a new resurrection from the dead. After them also did the Lord raise up in the Church of Scotland many burning and shining lights, men of the same spirit, mighty in converting of souls, walking in the same way, and who communicated their Counsels and keeped correspondence with Divines of other Nations, and with the greatest and purest lights in the Church of England, in the point of Reformation and setling of Church-government, which at that time was the common study and endeavour

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of both, and wherein they and their Succeſſors continued till the times of defection, which made an unhappy interruption of the work. What men are like to do in after times we cannot foreſee; but we have not ſeen or heard of any to this day, farrer from partiality and prejudice in the matters of God, then their wayes witneſſe them to have been; and were they now living we beleeve there would be none in the reformed Churches, ſo far ſwayed with partiality or prejudice, that would deny them this teſtimony.

The rule and patern of their Reformation.

They had no other rule and paterne of Reformation but the word of God, and the practice of the Apoſtolicke Churches in the Word. All the books of God are perfect, the book of life, the bo[ok] of nature, the book of providence, and eſpecially the book of Scripture, which was dyted by the Holy Ghoſt, to be a perfect directory to all the Churches, unto the ſecond coming of Jeſus Chriſt; but ſo that it preſuppoſeth the light and law of nature, or the rules of common prudence, to be our guide in circumſtances or things locall, temporall, and perſonall, which being *Eccleſiaſtico Politica*, are common to the Church with civill ſocieties, and concerning which, the Word giveth generall rules to be univerſally and conſtantly obſerved by all perſons, in all times and places: Of things of this kind a godly and wiſe Divine giveth two rules: One is, that the Phyſician cannot by ſending his letter to the Patient appoint the dyet and bath, the pulſe muſt bee toucht, and as it is in the proverbiall ſpeech, *gladiatorem oportet in arena capere conſilium*. The other is, that in things of this kind, when the change is not to the better, it is both without and againſt reaſon to make a change; without reaſon, becauſe when the change is made unto that which is but as good, the one and the other in reaſon are equall:

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Againſt reaſon, becauſe the change it ſelf in ſuch a caſe, is an hinderance to Edification, ſavoureth of the love of Innovation, and derogateth to the authority which maketh the Conſtitution.

Their certainty in matters of Religion.

What they had once received, not upon probable grounds in way of conjecture, but upon the warrant of the Word, and by the teaching of the ſpirit, with certaintie of faith, that they reſolved to hold faſt, & did hate every falſe way contrary unto it. They did not in the matters of Religion reſt upon a *Sceptical* or *Pyrrhonian* uncertainty (the charge of the Orthodox Divines againſt the tenets of Arminians and Socinians) which keepeth the mind uncertain unſtable, is a fountain of perpetuall alterations in the Church of God, an open door to all hereſies and ſchiſmes to enter by, and a ground of deſpairing to bring queſtions and controverſies to a finall iſſue and determination. And for us, as upon the one part, we not only conceive, that no man attaineth ſo full aſſurance of faith, in any matter of Religion, but he may receive encreaſe of his faith, and therefore ſhould alwayes have his minde open and ready to receive more light from the Word and Spirit of God: but alſo do ingenuouſly acknowledge (as wee have formerly profeſſed) that wee are moſt willing to hear and learn from the Word of God, what needeth further to be reformed in the Church of Scotland: Yet God forbid, that we ſhould never come to any certainty of perſwaſion, or that we ſhould ever be learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth; wee ought to be reſolute and unmoveable in ſo far as we have attained; and this we take to be the ground, as of other practices, ſo alſo of Covenants and Oaths, both aſſertory and promiſſory, in matters of Religion.

Their conſent with other Reformed Churches.

As they held it not ſufficient, to receive or retain ſome ſuch

ſuch practices, as other reformed Churches judged warrantable; for thus they ſhould have reſted upon ſome few principles and beginnings of Reformation, and might have differed as much in other things from the Reformed Churches, as they agreed in ſome things with them; ſo can it not be ſatisfactory, that any Church ſhould only practiſe ſome things, univerſally received in the Reformed Churches. (1) All Chriſtian Churches, although very different in ordinances and practices, yet do agree in ſome things. (2) If our deſire of Uniformity with other reformed Churches, and the reverend eſteem we have of them, draw us to conform to them in ſome things; upon the ſame reaſon we ought to joyne in all things wherein they do all agree amongſt themſelves. (3) Differences about Negatives and the denying of profeſſion and practice in other matters wherein they are all unanimous and uniform, may prove no leſſe dangerous and deſtructive, then differences about Affirmatives. The Arrians, Socinians, and many others, do erre dangerouſly in denying ſome poſitive points and received principles of the doctrine of the reformed Churches, concerning the Perſon of Chriſt, and his Offices. The Antinomians alſo (if we ſhould mention them) do alſo agree with us in the principles of Grace; but in their ſuperſtructures and concluſions, runne in a way deſtructive to the doctrine and deductions of the Apoſtolick and reformed Churches, and to the principles received by themſelves. (4) Such Churches as make profeſſion of differences only in Negatives, or in denying ſome practices received in the reformed Churches, have received, and do hold ſome poſitive practices of their own, which the reformed Churches do not allow, and which to them are negative. Of this (would we ſuffer our ſelves to deſcend into particulars) we might give divers known

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inſtances: now if they do not allow of the reformed Churches, in ſo far as they do not admit of theſe their poſitive practices, how ſhall they think that the reformed Churches can allow them in the like? for the rule is, *Wherein thou judgeſt another, thou condemneſt thy ſelf, for thou that judgeſt doſt the ſame things.*

They did honour *Luther*, *Calvin*, and many others, whether their Predeceſſors or contemporaries, who had heart or hand, eſpecially in an eminent degree, in the bleſſed work of Reformation: for their direction, they made uſe of the light which ſuch notable ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt did hold forth, in doctrine and diſcipline, and in all thankfulneſſe they did deſire and wiſh, that their names might be had in eternall remembrance: Nor was it poſſible that ſo great an alteration as the corrupt ſtate of the Church required could be effected, and not carry ſome remembrance of the inſtruments: but for this to call us *Calvinians*, and the reformed Churches, *Calvinian reformed Churches*, is to diſgrace the true Churches of Chriſt, and to ſimbolize with the Papiſts, who call themſelves The Catholicke Church, and hold the rule delivered by *Hierome* againſt the *Luciferians*: *If any where we finde men profeſsing Chriſtianity, called by the particular names of men, know them to be the Synagogue of Antichriſt, and not the Church of Chriſt.* The ſeparation may be well allowed to be called Browniſts, and others from the matter wherein they erre, and part from all, not onely the reformed, but Chriſtian Churches, as the *Monothelites* of old, and the *Anabapiſts* now, may bear their own names. They who apprehend any danger in names (as there is a great deale of danger in them) ought not to appropriate unto their own opinion, that which is common to all the reformed Churches, nor to joyne with Papiſts in giving names of Sects unto the

They are not to be called Calvinians.

reformed Churches; and they who conceive no evill in so doing, ought not to offend, that names are given unto them, especially since their differences from the reformed Churches, must be designed under some name and notion, and in this case charity commands the mildest names, such as hint most clearly at the difference, and are farrest from reproach, to be attributed unto them, as most discriminative and tolerable.

Their Reformation was not framed to State ends.

Nothing was farrer from their thoughts and intentions, then to frame in their own forge a Lesbian rule, answerable to any particular forme of civill policy, or complyable with State ends. That they looked with singleness of minde to the rule of Scripture, we give these three evidences (1) The great pains they took in searching the will of God, and after they had found it, their grievous sufferings from the civill authority in defence thereof, of both which afterward in the own place (2) The restlesse objection and continuall opposition of politick men and Court Sycophants against Presbyteriall government, as incompatible with Monarchy, and their manners (3) And the necessary assertion of the true policy of the Church by Divines in both Kingdoms (between whom there was no notable difference) demonstrating that it was in it self unalterable, because divine, and yet complyable with every lawfull kinde of humane policy and civill government, and able to keep a whole Kingdom or state in a right and sure way of Religion. Our chiefest reformers, had indeed their education in other Churches, which was the goodnesse of God to them and us: there did they see examples of Reformation, and conversed with other reformers, by whom they were taught from the word in the wayes of God, and thence did they bring (as the Romans their laws of old from Greece and other Nations) models

The Reformers not byassed, but benefited by education.

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of Church-government, that comparing one with another, they might fix upon that which was builded upon the foundation of the Apoſtles. Like as we accompt it no ſmall happines, that we have bin educated in the Church of Scotland, and are acquainted with the practice of Church-government there, which giveth us much light and confidence againſt ſuch ſcruples and doubtings as are powerfull enough to ſuſpend the aſſent of others, who by reaſon of their education in other Churches, are ſtrangers unto it. Nor do we know a reaſon why education in ſound doctrine and true worſhip, ſhould be accompted a matter of thankſgiving to God, and yet ſhould glory in this, that we are not by education ingaged in any one form of of Diſcipline and Church-government, but left to our ſelves to be moulded by our own private thoughts.

They intended and deſigned from the beginning, the Government of the Church by Aſſemblies and Presbyteries, although they could not attain that perfection at firſt in the infancie of Reformation, but gave place to neceſſity, which in ſuch caſes is univerſall, and in this they followed the example and practice of the Churches planted by the Apoſtles, which if not at firſt, yet afterward were of greater number in one City, then did or could ordinarily aſſemble in one place for the worſhip of God, and therefore had a plurality of Paſtors and Officers, which made up a common Presbytery for governing the whole: They ſet up ſuch Officers in the Church, as were both neceſſary and ſufficient for the Church, *Paſtors, Teachers, ruling Elders*, and *Deacons*: They did not permit ſuch as are called Laymen, and intended to continue ſuch, to preach or propheſie in the Congregation, nor did they admit of any other ruling Elders, but ſuch as are ſolemnly elected and ordained, although they do maintain themſelves

They intended Presbyteriall Government from the beginning.

selves upon their own means, and attend their own particular Callings, which is not incompatible with their Office, especially they being appointed in a number competent and proportionable to the number of the people, and quantity of the Congregation; And their Ecclesiastical charge, not being pastorall, nor requiring any great meditation or study apart, but such as they may easily attend, without neglect of their owne particular affaires.

What they give unto the Magistrate.

What shall be rendred unto the Magistrate by others, whose particular tenets are not yet known either to the Church or Magistrate, unlesse it be in a hid and secret way, unto which we are not privy, we cannot determine: but the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, concerning the honour and obedience due to the Magistrate, is openly known by their confessions of faith, and long continued practices; and this much we know, that the principles both of Civill and Church-government, are laid out in Scripture, and therefore the one cannot be contrary to the other, or they inconsistent between themselves. Nor do wee measure the power of the Magistrate by the principles of Presbyteriall Government, but both of them by the Word, and therefore deny not unto the Magistrate what God giveth them; and more then this dare we not professe, for any respect to our selves, or to the form of Ecclesiasticall Government professed by us: How much, and for what ends, the Pagans and Infidels of old, the Papists, Prelates, and Arminians of late, have laboured to make the way of Christ hatefull to Princes and Magistrates, is too well known, and hath been bitterly felt, yet God hath cursed this policy in the end. There may bee good reason to expresse our judgement of this or other points of duty from Scripture: but to avouch when we

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are not challenged, and that only in the generall, by way of comparison, That we ascribe more to the Magistrate, then the reformed Churches doe, they being faithfull to their own principles of Ecclesiasticall Government, may suffer a harder construction, then we our selves would willingly under-go, or put upon the intentions of men, who seek not their own things, but the things of Jesus Christ.

Their diligent search for true Church-government, and the good hand of God upon them.

As the blessed Instruments of Reformation proceeded by no other rule but the Word of God, so did they with great judgement and learning, which they had in a measure above others, examine and frame all things diligently and exactly according to the rule; and although the Reformers in England were either altogether, or for the greater part taken up with the Doctrine; yet in the Church of Scotland it was otherwise. After the doctrine was established, which was speedily done, they were exercised in Conferences and Assemblies, with debating the matters of Discipline and Government above the space of 20 years, which endured much opposition from authority, from worldly men, and from the adversaries of the Truth, both Prelaticall on the one hand, and upon the other hand Separatists, of which sort some came into Scotland from England, which was unto them a whetstone to quicken them, and to make them the more circumspect & exact in their way, which lay in the middle, betwixt Episcopacy upon the one hand, and popular confusion on the other. It pleased the Lord, whose presence and blessing they sought after in these dayes with frequent prayer and humiliation, both in private and in the publike Nationall Assemblies, so to assist and lead them in all truth, that the Church of Scotland was honoured from abroad, both from England and other Nations, with the testimony of such a Reformation, as other Churches

accounted to be the greateſt happineſſe upon earth, and when they were wiſhing after a Reformation, they made it the meaſure of their wiſhes. We would willingly ſhun compariſons, were we not brought upon this ſtraine: We do upon very good reaſon judge the Church of England in the midſt of her Ceremonies, to have beene a true Church, and the miniſtery thereof, notwithſtanding the many blemiſhes and corruptions cleaving unto it, to have been a true miniſtery, and ſhall never deny unto them that praiſe, whether in debating controverſies with Papiſts, or in practicall Divinity for private Chriſtians, which they do moſt juſtly deſerve. Upon the other part, we are neither ſo ignorant nor ſo arrogant, as to aſcribe to the Church of Scotland ſuch abſolute purity and perfection, as hath not need or cannot admit of further Reformation. Yet that there is a wide difference betwixt the one and the other, acknowledged alſo in the Common Covenant; Wee bring two famous witneſſes from the Church of England to prove: The one is *Brightman*; *Loath would I be* (ſaith he, ſpeaking of the Church of Scotland) *to provoke any man to envy, or to grieve him with my words: Yet this I muſt ſay, There is no place where the Doctrine ſoundeth more purely, the worſhip of God is exerciſed more uncorruptly, where more faithfull diligence of the Paſtor doth flouriſh, or more free or willing obedience is given by the people, nor yet where there is greater reverencing of the whole Religion amongſt all orders.* And afterwards; *Neither doth it onely keep the Doctrine of ſalvation free from corruption, but it doth alſo both deliver in writing, and exerciſe in practice that ſincere manner of government whereby men are made partakers of ſalvation,* Revel. of the Apocal. cap. 37. The other is *Cartwright*: *Yea, the Scotiſh Nation, which were ſome yeers behind us in the profeſſion of the Goſpell, the firſt day almoſt that they received*

the truth, did by many degrees in the way of purity outstrip us. These two witnesses, unto which we might adde many other from the reformed Churches in other Nations, bear testimony, that there is no such thing in the Church of Scotland, as might prove her to be no Church, or her Communion in worship with her, as the Liturgy, Ceremonies and Prelacy in the Church of England; or that the Corruptions of the one and the other are of the same kinde, equally destructive of the essence of a Church, and equally impedetive of Communion and worship. All visible Churches, which have been, or shall be at any time on earth, consist of persons good and bad, Sheep and Goats, Wheat and Tares, such as walk Christianly and such as walk inordinatly: Which therefore must also be the condition of the Church of Scotland, yet the order of the Church, admitteth not either ignorant or openly prophane and scandalous persons, to the participation of the Lords supper: If any Pastor and particular Eldership bee negligent in their duty, it is their fault, who are to beare their own guiltinesse, and ought not to be imputed to the order of the Church, which standeth in force against it. We may be very confident, that the godly people, who did transplant themselves out of this Island, (the fame of whose piety and zeal shall never suffer detraction or the smallest diminution from our thoughts or words) might have lived in the Church of Scotland, injoying the pure Ordinances of God, with peace in their consciences and comfort to their souls, and would have willingly come into Scotland, when they went into New-England, could they have been free of the usurpation and tyranny of Prelats and the Prelatical party, which at that time did reigne and rage in that Kingdome, vexing the Godly Ministery and people there, with many and bitter sufferings.

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The defence thereof against adversaries on both hands.

The two extreams of the true forme of Church-Government, which standeth in the middle way betwixt Popish and Prelaticall Tyranny, and Brownisticall and popular Anarchie, were contrary one to another, and have their own degrees of Tyranny or Anarchie in themselves, which is the cause of their sub-divisions, fractions, and differences amongst themselves: but both sides agree, and strongly joyne in opposing the true Government, which standing constantly, and without variation between the one and the other, is contrary to both. This is the true cause (nor could it be otherwise) that on what hand the invasion was hotest, there the defence was strongest. Against Prelacie which had many friends, and therefore made many enemies to Presbyteries, the Presbyteriall power and pens were long pleading: No sooner is the Prelaticall party, by the power and blessing of God, begun to be subdued in this Iland, but ariseth unexpectedly, The opposition on the other hand, waiting the opportunity, stronger then it was before, which moved some of our Divines of late, to write on this hand in defence of the government of the reformed Churches, as others had done before them in other Churches. In France *Beza*, & against *Morellius Sadeel*. Two Nationall Synods also of the reformed Churches in France, the one at Orleans in the year 1561. Another at Rothel 1571. And in all the reformed Churches, governed by Presbyteries and Assemblies, the positive grounds of the Government are laid open, which work equally against Adversaries on both sides, and have been applyed against them *pro re nata* as they did arise or shew themselves. If so much have not been written upon one hand as the other, in a polemicall and Anaskeuastick way, let it be attributed unto the Adversarie, which was but obscure and weak, and from whom

whom ſmall danger was apprehended, it being laid for a common ground by them all, That where a whole Nation is converted to the Chriſtian faith, every particular Church is not to bee left to it ſelfe, as if it were alone in a Nation, but that Chriſt had provided a way, and there is a neceſsitie of a common Nationall Governement, to preſerve all the Churches in Unitie and Peace.

It is the Will of God, and hath been alwayes the conſtant courſe of Divine providence, that when his ſervants have been diligent in ſearching the truth, and zealous by profeſſing and preaching, to hold it forth unto others, that they confirme and ſeal the truth, which they have beleeved and profeſſed with their confeſsion and ſuffering. The Church of *Scotland* had many Confeſſours, divers Paſtours brought before the Lords of Councell, the High Commiſſion, Dioceſan Synods, were removed from their places, deprived of all the means of their livelyhood; ſome confined, others impriſoned: a third ſort brought into *England*, whence ſome of them were never ſuffered to returne, all of them for the Government of the Church. Others for the ſame cauſe were proceeded againſt by the criminall Judge, condemned of Treaſon, ſentenced to death, and after long impriſonment, before and after the ſentence, could finde no other mercy, but perpetuall baniſhment, wherein the greater part of them ended their dayes, without any Congregation, or Company of their owne Nation, rich or poore, to comfort them. So many of theſe witneſſes as were ſuffered to live in their owne Land, did not undergoe any voluntary exile, but in much poverty and affliction, went up and down, teaching and confirming the good people, and waiting for a ſpring time, wherein the face of God might

Their ſufferings for the true Church government.

again shine upon his Church and (to use their owne expression) some buds might arise out of the stumpe of Church government left in the earth. Had they at that time abandoned the poore oppressed Church, when they were put from their places, and deprived of their liberty, and had carried away with them such of the people as were of their minde, they had (if wee would judge according to ordinary providence, and the course of second causes) opposed the poore defolated Church for a prey to Episcopall oppression, and made the case of Religion in that Kingdome desperate: Or if they should have returned upon a revolution of extraordinary providence, they would have preferred the sufferings of their Brethren left behinde them in the midst of the fiery triall, unto their owne exile, and would have been loath to have impeded or retarded the late Reformation, with any thing they had brought with them from abroad: so many as returned from constrained banishment, having in all Unitie of minde, and heart joyned in the worke of Reformation.

Their exercising of that true Church government for which they had done and suffered so much.

The Church of *Scotland*, as all other reformed Churches, hath used the power of the Keyes, & Church-censures of all sorts, especially the gravest of excommunication, with such sharpnesse and severity, and yet with such caution and moderation, as it hath been very powerfull and effectuall, to preserve the Name of God from being blasphemed, the Church and people of God from contagion, and the Delinquents brought under censure from destruction, which are the ends proposed by them in executing the censures of the Church, and where such scandalls arise, whether in matter of opinion or practise, as are apt to make the Name of God to be blasphemed, are dangerous for the Church, and waste the Consciences

ces of the ſinners themſelves, being accompanied with obſtinacie and contempt of Eccleſiaſticall Authority, they doe apply this laſt remedy, according to the order preſcribed by Chriſt, againſt ſcandalous tranſgreſſours; To limit the cenſure of excommunication in matter of opinion, to the common and uncontroverted principles; and in the matter of manners, to the common and univerſall practiſes of Chriſtianitie; and in both, to the parties knowne light, is the dangerous doctrine of the Arminians, and Socinians, openeth a wide doore, and proclaimeth liberty to all other practices and errors, which are not fundamentall, and univerſally abhorred by all Chriſtians, and tendeth to the overthrow of the Reformed Religion: which we wiſh all ſound and ſober ſpirits to abſtain from, leſt it render them and their profeſſion ſuſpected of ſome ſuch opinions and practiſes, as in charity wee judge to be farre from their minds and wayes.

Two main objections are made againſt the principles and practiſe of the order and government of the reformed Churches, for which the *Church* and Kingdome of *Scotland*, have done and ſuffered ſo much of old and of late. One is, that there is no need of the Authoritative power of Presbiteries and Synods, and that the exhortation of particular *Churches* one to another, the Proteſtation of one againſt another, and the withdrawing of communion one from another, may bee a ſufficient remedy, and no leſſe effectuall againſt all offences, then excommunication it ſelfe: eſpecially if the Magiſtrate ſhall vouchſafe his aſſiſtance, and interpoſe his authoritie, for ſtrengthening the ſentence of Noncommunion?

This government neceſſary for Churches living together.

To this we anſwer.

1. That this Objection ſuppoſeth a caſe, which hath

not been found in the Church of *Scotland* for the ſpace of above foureſcore yeares, and which wee beleeve was never heard of in any of the Reformed Churches, except thoſe of the ſeparation: the pronouncing of Non-communion or Excommunication againſt a whole Church. Our excommunication hath beene executed, and but ſeldome againſt particular members, never againſt a whole Church, and wee thinke never ſhall bee, and therefore this imaginary feare of that which never falleth forth, is not conſiderable: Rules are made for ordinary and uſuall caſes.

2. What ſhall bee the remedy where the cenſure is mutuall, and two or more Churches mutually proteſt, and pronounce the ſentence of Non-communion one againſt other? unleſſe there be a common Presbyterie, or Synod made up of the whole, which may decide the controverſie, and give order unto the ſeverall Churches. This Non-communion may prove a mean of diviſion, rather then union.

3. In this Exhortation, Proteſtation, and Non-communion, there is no more to be found, then one particular member may doe againſt another, which yet is acknowledged to bee unſufficient for removing of offences, unleſſe the authority of the Church, of which both of them bee members, ſhall interveine: Were it in the power of particular members to ſubmit, or not ſubmit, as they pleaſe, there would bee as great difference and diviſion amongſt members, as now there is amongſt Churches.

4. What ſhall be done if the Magiſtrate be negligent or care for none of thoſe things? or if his Authoritie cannot be obtained? or if hee bee of another Religion, and foment the difference for his owne politicke ends?

hath

hath not the wisedome of the Sonne of God provided remedies in the Church for all the internall necessities of the Church, and constitute it a perfect body within it selfe.

5. By what probabilitie can it be made to appeare to any Rationall man and indifferent minde, that no Authoritie shall be as valide as authority against the obstinate, that *via admonitionis, & requisitionis*, is equall with *via citationis, & publicæ authoritatis*: There cannot be so much as triall and examination of the offence without Authoritie, unlesse the partie be willing to appeare: that perswasion and Jurisdiction, that the delivering over to Satan, and thereby striking the Conscience with the terrour of God, by the authority of Jesus Christ, which hath the promise of a speciall and strong ratification in Heaven, and any other Eccleſiasticall way whatsoever, which must be inferiour to this, and depend onely upon perswasion on the one part, and free will on the other, can be supposed to bee a like efficacious. No man will say, but in civill matters, it is one thing to have adoe with our neighbour, who hath no more authority over us, then we have over him; and another thing to have to doe with civill power which hath authority over both.

The other Objection is: That by this Authoritie and Order of Government, one Church hath power over another, which is contrary to that liberty and equalitie Christ hath endued his Churches with, and is no other but a new Prelaticall dominion set over the Churches of Christ?

This government agreeeth with the libertie and equalitie of particular Churches.

To this we answer.

1. That we are very farre from imposing or acknowledging any such collaterall power of one particular

Church over another, nay not of the greatest, in all respects whatsoever over the smallest, for God hath made them equall one to another. The power which we maintain, is aggregative of the Officers of many congregations over the particular members of their Corporation: even as a member of the Naturall body is not subject to another; but each one of them to the whole Man consisting of them all: And as one Member of Parliament, one Counseller, or to goe lower, one member of a company, is not subject to another, but every one to the whole Colledge: The same may bee said of townes and cities: so is it with particular congregations combined in one Presbyterie. All the Reformed Churches acknowledge the Independencie of one particular Church upon another.

2. It is as miserable a mistake to compare Presbyteries and Prelates together: for the courts of Prelates are altogether forraign and extrinsecall to the congregations over which they rule, and then indeed the Metropolitan Church usurpeth and tyrannizeth over other Churches: but the power of Presbeteries is intrinsecall and naturall, they being constitute of the Pastors and Elders of the particular congregations over which they are set: So that another without themselves doth not beare rule over them, but all of them together by common consent doe rule over every one, which is a most milde and free forme of Church-government: it being no more contrary to the liberty of a particular Church to bee ruled by a common Collegiate Presbytery, or Ecclesiastick Senate, then it is for a Member of a particular congregation to bee ruled by his owne particular Eldership.

3. Were this way of government as well known by experience

experience unto others, as it is unto us, it would bee accounted rather *Subsidium*, then *Dominium*, and would be looked at, rather as auxiliary to particular Ministers and Elderships, then authoratative over them, especially since they neither ordain nor depose Ministers, they discern no censure, nor sentence of Excommunication of any Member, without the knowledge and consent of the congregation which is particularly concerned therein: whatsoever their authority be, the Minister and particular Eldership are advised, assisted, and strengthned, rather then commanded, enjoyned, or forced: which the particular Churches should much rather chuse, then through want of counsell and assistance, suffer themselves to run rashly upon Deposition or Excommunication, and afterward either be brought to the neighbouring Churches to the publike confession of their errour, which lesseneth their authority afterward, or to have the sentence of Non-communion pronounced against them, which must bee the cause of Schisme or scandall.

So much for the present have we said, not for confutation; but meerely for justifying our owne, and other Reformed Churches, against such misrepresentings and mistakings, as in matters of Religion are too frequent in this place at this time, to the perverting and abusing of simple and unstable minds, which will never be brought to a consistence and unitie, without this true order and governement of the *Church*, and the blessing of God from heaven upon his owne ordinance. Were Magistrates and civill powers acquainted with the power thereof, they would finde their authority increased, their worke more easie, and their places more comfortable thereby. Such as are most adverse to this order and government (if they allow no materiall difference in doctrine

This government usefull and beneficiall to all sorts of persons.

ctrine, worship, or practise) might enjoy their peace, and all the comforts of their Ministery and profession under it, without controlment, from that authoritative power which they so much apprehend. The *Church of England* which God hath blessed with so much learning and pietie, by this Reformation and Uniformitie with other Reformed Churches, which all of us have solemnely sworn and subscribed, sincerely, really, and constantly through the grace of God, to endeavour in our severall places and callings, should be a praise in the Earth.

FINIS.